

PSCI 1040: American Government–Laws and Institutions
Professor Blackstone Section 001
Spring 2016, TR 8:00 AM–9:20 AM, Lyceum

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the roles of the United States and Texas governments in the American political system. We will consider the institutions, processes, and decisions of political actors that define American and Texas government. We focus particular attention on the United States and Texas constitutions, civil rights and liberties, federalism as well as the institutions that comprise the three branches of government.

Team 1040

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9:00 am–12:00 pm, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants (TAs) Mr. Mahdi Amirisefat
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Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders Mr. Matt Guzman
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Supplemental Instruction (SI)

The UNT Learning Center provides Supplemental Instruction for this course. SI Leaders are UNT students that have taken this course before and performed well. Your SIs will hold weekly group study sessions and a weekly office hour. All students are welcome to and strongly encouraged to attend SI sessions. Your SIs cannot answer questions about your grades but can help with any questions about course content. Your Supplemental Instruction Leaders are Matt Guzman and Jeanne-Anne Tye. Once the SI session schedule is finalized, SI sessions will be added to the course calendar in Blackboard.

Office Hours

Office hours for myself and the TAs are listed above. We will always be available during those times. Even outside of those hours I am often in my office and you are welcome to stop in any time my door is open.

Class Discussion in Piazza

This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates, myself, and the teaching assistants. Rather than emailing questions that might be of relevance to the entire class, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza.

Create an account and join the class at piazza.com. After creating and confirming your account, you can access our class page at: <https://piazza.com/unt/spring2016/psci1040/home>.

E-Mail

Should you have private questions or concerns, you can reach the Teaching Assistants or myself by email. If you write Monday through Friday, you should receive a response within 24 hours. If you don't, please feel free to send a reminder! If you write over the weekend, you may have to wait until Monday for a reply. A note on etiquette: (1) please sign your emails with your name, (2) please include an appropriate salutation (Hint: you can't go wrong with, "Hi, Dr. Blackstone."), and (3) please ask a specific question if you need a response.

If we need to contact you, we will send you a message at your UNT email address. Please check Blackboard and your UNT email regularly so you will receive all course-related information.

Blackboard

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. You should check Blackboard regularly to ensure that you are up to date on all class-related information. Some course assignments will be submitted in Blackboard and student grades will be posted in Blackboard.

Remind

If you wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text, you may sign up to receive notifications at this link: <https://remind.com/join/bstone1040>.

Facebook

I have created a Facebook group for students enrolled in PSCI 1040. I will post links to news stories related to American politics to the Facebook group. You are also welcome to post information relevant to class. Joining the group is optional and will not impact your grade. If you wish to join the group, go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bstone1040/>.

Be advised that information you share in the course Facebook page is governed by Facebook's privacy policies. Also, note that I do not guarantee that I will read and respond to every post in the Facebook group; if you have a question that only I can answer, email me or see me in my office.

Required Materials

1. Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright. 2015. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 6th Brief Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (Hereinafter, *KTR*.)
ISBN for print+eBook edition: 9781483381138.
ISBN for eBook only: 9781483380681.

- This text can be purchased at the UNT Bookstore. Prices range from \$37.55 (for rental of a used hard-copy) to \$83.45 (for purchase of a new hard copy that also includes eBook access). You can rent or purchase the text at lower cost from other retailers. I recommend [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [BigWords.com](https://www.bigwords.com).

2. Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, ed. 2014. *PSCI 1040 Workbook*. Ashville, N.C.: Soomo Learning.
ISBN for workbook code: 9780991135578

- An access code for this text can be purchased at the UNT Bookstore *or* in Blackboard. If you purchase access through Blackboard, the cost is \$28.75; the bookstore charges \$38.35.

3. Clicker. Turning Point Response Card RF-LCD *or* ResponseWare subscription for use on a personal electronic device.

We will make use of clickers in this course. You must either purchase a Turning Point Response Card *or* purchase a subscription to ResponseWare to answer in-class questions on a personal electronic devices (phone, tablet, or laptop). I strongly recommend you purchase a clicker for two reasons. First, using a clicker rather than a phone/tablet/laptop minimizes distractions from your personal device. Second, some students report that the ResponseWare app can be buggy and will sometimes require students to re-enter log-in credentials in the middle of class sessions. You will miss points if your device times out.

- New and used clickers may be rented or purchased at the UNT bookstore. Prices range from for \$29.25 to \$45.70. If you purchase or rent a clicker from another source, be sure that your device is a Turning Technology device. Clickers made by other manufacturers are not compatible.
- In order to use your own device instead of a clicker, you must download the appropriate ResponseWare app for your device (iPhone, Android, etc.) *and* purchase a ResponseWare license. A one-year license costs \$19.99; a two-year license costs \$29.99. Turning Technologies recommends ResponseWare for use with unlimited data plans; you may incur cell phone service or usage charges.

Electronics Use Policy¹

Research shows that using an electronic device with a screen during class distracts other students around you and hinders their learning. To eliminate the screen distraction “halo” effect on neighbors, we will have two different zones in the classroom to accommodate those who prefer to use electronics and those who wish not to see any electronics:

- Students who would like to be guaranteed a “screen free” zone should sit in the LEFT half of the classroom (as you are facing the front). Students sitting in this area must be able to commit to not using any electronic devices with a screen, of any size (laptop, phone, tablet, iPod, etc.) for the entire 80 minutes of class. You may use your devices before class starts, but you must put them entirely away when class begins and leave them away until class is over.
- Students who will or might be using any electronic devices that have any kind of a screen (excluding Turning Point clickers), or who don’t mind seeing others use such devices, should sit on the RIGHT

¹Adapted from Julia Kregenow. 2015. “On Monotasking.” *Teach Better* (teachbetter.co), June 9, 2015. <http://teachbetter.co/kregenow/monotask.html>.(Accessed December 15, 2015).

half of the room. This applies regardless of the reason the student is using the device, whether it is goofing off or not—even if it is a legitimate educational reason or an extenuating personal circumstance (e.g. laptop for notetaking, or checking texts for family emergency). This also applies regardless of the frequency and duration of the electronics use (e.g. glancing at just one text message or actively taking notes for all 80 minutes).

Assignments and Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following components.

Component	Percent of Course Grade
Exams	60
Reading Quizzes & Workbook Assignments	25
In-Class Points (Clickers and Activities)	15
Total	100

Course grades will be assigned according to the following schedule: $\geq 90\%$ is an A; 80–89% is a B; 70–79% is a C; 60–69% is a D, and $<60\%$ is an F.

Exams

Three exams will be given—2 unit tests and a cumulative final. Exams will cover material from all lectures and required readings. The exams are closed book and closed notes. The exams will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, and matching questions.

Your top two exam scores will be used to calculate your final grade; each will be worth 30% of your course grade. The final exam will be comprehensive and will be held during our course’s assigned final exam period. The final is optional. If you have taken the first two exams and scored to your satisfaction, you may skip the final exam. If you are dissatisfied with your exam scores or missed one of the first two tests, you may take the final exam in an attempt to raise your grade.

No make-up exams will be given unless you have a university-excused absence or a family or medical emergency which is documented and verifiable. Since you may drop your lowest exam grade, if you miss an exam due to illness, lack of preparation, oversleeping, etc., then you may miss that exam and use it as your lowest grade (i.e. the “drop”). If you miss a second exam, you will receive a zero for that exam grade.

If you will miss an exam because of a university-approved absence, you should make arrangements to take the exam early if you know about your absence ahead of time. Students that will miss an exam due to travel with UNT athletic teams or performance groups, or for observance of a religious holiday, for example, should make arrangements to take their exams prior to their absences.

On exams days, students may not (1) wear hats, sunglasses, or headphones; (2) eat or drink anything; (3) leave the exam room—even to use the lavatory; (4) answer a phone call; (5) touch, use, or keep in view any electronic devices or class related materials; (6) take the exam after the first student has submitted their exam and left the classroom.

Reading Quizzes and Workbook Assignments

Your readings come from two sources—the *Keeping the Republic* textbook and the PSCI Workbook. For

each reading assignment, you will also complete a related assignment. Reading quizzes and workbook assignments are due at 8:00 am on their due dates.

- *KTR Reading Quizzes*

For each of the nine assigned chapters in the KTR text, you will complete an associated reading quiz. The quizzes are designed to make sure you have done the reading and mastered the basic factual information in the readings. The quizzes are multiple-choice and are posted in Blackboard. You may take each reading quiz as many times as you like before the deadline and your highest score will be recorded. Missed quizzes cannot be made up. Your lowest reading quiz score will be dropped.

- *Workbook Assignments*

There are eight workbook chapters. Each workbook chapter is organized around the four learning objectives adopted by Texas's Higher Education Coordinating Board: (1) critical thinking skills, (2) social responsibility, (3) communication skills, and (4) personal responsibility. Workbook chapters provide an opportunity to apply the material covered in the textbook and lecture. Assignments include multiple choice questions, polls, short answer questions, and response board entries (similar to discussion board posts). Your lowest workbook assignment score will be dropped.

In-Class Points

You will earn class points for in-class quizzes on the assigned readings, for answering questions presented in lecture with your clicker and for participating in in-class activities. Missed class points cannot be made up. If you have a university-excused absence, you will not be penalized for missing points offered in class if you provide appropriate documentation to verify your absence. In order to earn points with your clicker, you must register it in Blackboard. Register your clicker prior to our class meeting on Thursday, January 21.

Extra Credit

I do not plan to offer extra credit in this course. Students should not expect or ask for additional extra credit. *If* I decide to offer extra credit, it will be offered to the entire class. Note the grading criteria and plan accordingly for your success. If you need a particular grade to graduate, keep a scholarship, etc., then exert the effort necessary to earn such a grade. If problems arise, address them early before they become unresolvable!

Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of F in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: <http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable

accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Classroom Conduct.

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Reading and Assignment Due Dates

Readings and assignments should be completed prior to the class meeting for which they are listed.

⊙ indicates there is no reading assignment due for a class meeting.

Additional readings and assignments may be added at the instructor's discretion.

Unit 1

Course Introduction

- January 19 (T) Read the Syllabus.
 Register your clicker in **Blackboard**.
 Sign up for **Piazza** and adjust your notification settings to suit your preferences..
 Sign up to receive announcements via **Remind.com**. (optional)
 Join the **class Facebook group**. (optional)

American Political Culture & the Constitution

- January 21 (R) Read KTR Chapter 1: Power and Citizenship in American Politics
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 1 in Blackboard before class
- January 26 (T) Read KTR Chapter 2: The Politics of the American Founding
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 2 in Blackboard before class
- January 28 (R) Read Workbook: The Constitution and complete embedded activities before class
- February 2 (T) ⊙

Federalism

- February 4 (R) Read KTR Chapter 3: Federalism
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 3 in Blackboard before class
- February 9 (T) Read Workbook: Federalism and complete embedded activities before class
- February 11 (R) ⊙
- February 16 (T) ⊙

Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

- February 18 (R) Read KTR Chapter 4: Fundamental American Liberties
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 4 in Blackboard before class
- February 23 (T) Read Workbook: Civil Liberties and complete embedded activities before class
- February 25 (R)
- March 1 (T) Read KTR Chapter 5: The Struggle for Equal Rights
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 5 in Blackboard before class
- March 3 (R) Read Workbook: Civil Rights and complete embedded activities before class
- March 8 (T)

Exam

March 10 (R) **Unit 1 Exam**

March 15 (T) and March 17 (R): No Class Meetings. Enjoy your Spring Break!

Unit 2

Congress

- March 22 (T) Read KTR Chapter 6: Congress
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 6 in Blackboard before class
- March 24 (R) Read Workbook: The Legislative Branch and complete embedded activities before class
- March 29 (T)
- March 31 (R)

The Presidency & the Bureaucracy

- April 5 (T) Read KTR Chapter 7: The Presidency
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 7 in Blackboard before class
- April 7 (R) Read Workbook: The Presidency and complete embedded activities before class
- April 12 (T) Read KTR Chapter 8: The Bureaucracy
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 8 in Blackboard before class
- April 14 (R) Read Workbook: The Bureaucracy and complete embedded activities before class

Texas Legislative and Executive Branches

April 19 (T) ◉

Courts

- April 21 (R) Read KTR Chapter 9: The American Legal System and the Courts
 Complete KTR Reading Quiz 9 in Blackboard before class
- April 26 (T) ◉
- April 28 (R) Read Workbook: The Courts and complete embedded activities before class
- May 3 (T) ◉

Exams

May 5 (R) **Unit 2 Exam**

May 10 (T), 8:00 am **Cumulative Final Exam** (optional)